



**Interview with Bertie Poston**  
**Conducted by Kevin Roe on March 12, 1987**

[start of transcription]

**Kevin Roe:** Basically, I just wanted to, I am interested in learning more about the town of Wiehle which was here I guess when you were born.

**Bertie Poston:** Oh yes.

**Kevin Roe:** And I just wanted to know maybe like you could tell me what it was, maybe when you uh, I guess you were born here? And—

**Bertie Poston:** Yes, I was born in the house up on Reston Avenue. It's going to be torn down shortly.

**Kevin Roe:** And when, what year was that?

**Bertie Poston:** 1895.

**Kevin Roe:** 1895. Wow.

**Bertie Poston:** I'm having a birthday next week.

**Kevin Roe:** Oh, really? So you will be—

**Bertie Poston:** On Monday.

**Kevin Roe:** Oh really? So you will be 92?

**Bertie Poston:** 92 years old.

**Kevin Roe:** That's right. Okay. And was your father, one of the original, landowners in the town? Or—

**Bertie Poston:** No, he was born and raised in Bluemont up at the foot of the mountains.

**Kevin Roe:** Oh, in Loudoun County?

**Bertie Poston:** And he moved, came to Wiehle, in I would say 1891. Or maybe 1892 I am not real sure about it but it was a couple of years before I was born. And

there was a large lumber mill that the Wiehles operated where they made window frames and spooks for wagons and lumber. They had a number of long buildings where they stored the lumber for seasoning. And his specialty was window frames.

**Kevin Roe:** Oh, so he came here because of the mill?

**Bertie Poston:** So he came here to work.

**Kevin Roe:** Okay.

**Bertie Poston:** Later he bought this home where I was born.

**Kevin Roe:** So, did he build the home by himself?

**Bertie Poston:** No, he didn't the Wiehles built the home. There were two other houses along what they called Washington Avenue which is closed now. It crossed Reston Avenue and went up in and disappeared in the woods. Years ago, if you walked along long enough you would come to Herndon.

**Kevin Roe:** So, it was kind of like where Spring Street goes now?

**Bertie Poston:** No, it was just a wagon road. But just with tracks through it. I can't remember ever seeing a vehicle go up there but the tracks were there some time or other there had been a road. And there was a hotel.

**Kevin Roe:** The Aesculapian Hotel?

**Bertie Poston:** In that wooded area between that house and the big Bowman house. I have a picture of it. A lot of people doubted that there was a hotel there, but it was there, and the well is still there but uh furnished it with water.

**Kevin Roe:** Oh, really? So, it was in the area between your house and the Bowman house?

**Bertie Poston:** Yes.

**Kevin Roe:** And it's since been grown up with woods?

**Bertie Poston:** Oh, it's torn, the hotel was torn down years ago. And it had not operated for, oh, fifty years I guess. But the Wiehles— well I don't know you ask the questions.

**Kevin Roe:** Okay, well, I think I found a picture of the hotel in a book here.

**Bertie Poston:** Oh, yes.

**Kevin Roe:** I was wondering if it's the one you— I found this is a history of the farm that Mr. Bowman wrote. I guess is that the hotel you were talking about there?

**Bertie Poston:** Yes, and this is the big house.

**Kevin Roe:** Right, right, okay. But what was, how many people lived in Wiehle when you were living there? I have never been able to figure out.

**Bertie Poston:** I was counting the other day on the number of houses that were occupied with families and I wouldn't know how, but there were twenty, I came up with twenty.

**Kevin Roe:** Twenty families or twenty houses?

**Bertie Poston:** Twenty houses. And they were all built except one, by Dr. Wiehle before my father came here. I don't think there were any houses built after that. Dr. Wiehle's cousin, Robert Wiehle had built the houses down there in Ivy Oak Square, down at— well it's surrounded by apartments.

**Kevin Roe:** Oh, the Sycamores?

**Bertie Poston:** It's a house similar to my house.

**Kevin Roe:** It's the one that's still standing?

**Bertie Poston:** Yes.

**Kevin Roe:** Yes, I saw it the other day. Yeah.

**Bertie Poston:** Well it's supposed to be of historic value and will be preserved. Although I don't think— I think Mister what's his name?

**Kevin Roe:** Grubisich.

**Bertie Poston:** Don't he own, don't he live there?

**Kevin Roe:** He use to live there about five or ten years ago.

**Bertie Poston:** Yes, so—

**Kevin Roe:** Yes, he told me about that, it has since been bought by a young couple.

**Bertie Poston:** Well he had it all restored, in fact, it looked like it did when I was a little girl because Goldie Wiehle was— we grew up together.

**Kevin Roe:** Oh, really? That was Mr. Wiehle's daughter?

**Bertie Poston:** That was Robert Wiehle's daughter. He was the station agent and the postmaster and he also had a store that was near that house and it burned a long, long time ago. And he was also the station agent for the Southern Railway around from Washington to Bluemont when I was small, and then later it was turned over to the Washington and Old Dominion Electric Company. And he was the station agent until he died.

**Kevin Roe:** And did he live in Wiehle until he died?

**Bertie Poston:** Beg pardon?

**Kevin Roe:** He lived here till he died?

**Bertie Poston:** Yes, he lived in that house. Goldie was born there. She just died in the last 2-3 years. She was a little older than I.

**Kevin Roe:** Well, was there much of a change after Dr. – I know Dr. Wiehle died relatively early I guess you must have been five or six years old when Dr. Wiehle died, was there much of a change in the town after he died? Or did things just keep going as if–

**Bertie Poston:** Well, his country home, was at the bottom of the hill there near the gazebo. He walked to the gazebo to the station over where the train stopped. And next to it was a frame house that he built, had built for Robert Wiehle's mother, his aunt. And I guess she died there probably. Well when they tore his– when it started, he, of course, the brick house had not been completed. I am not sure it had even been started when he died but he had made plans for it. And they tore the original house down that was opposite the gazebo. Tore that down and they tore the other house down and men who worked in the area bought the smaller house and built it on a lot next to my house. And eventually my brother bought that house. And they changed the road, moved Reston Avenue, it was torn down. And my brother's heirs, he was– he died many years ago, just made a trade of a lot on his side of my house, my nephew. So that was one house that was built after Dr. Wiehle died. And of course, the brick house was, it was completed sufficiently for Mrs. Wiehle and there were three sons, Max, and Louie, and Coligny and a daughter Louise. And it was completed about, sufficiently for her to be married there and I think about 1906. I guess I was ten years old, eleven years old. And she was married there and then, 2-3 years, several years later the Wiehles sold to a company which consisted of Mr. Crighton from Springfield, Missouri and Mr. Seamens and Dr. Hutchison from Herndon. And Mr. Seamens died and Mr. Crighton decided to sell out to Dr. Hutchison and from then on I can't remember exactly probably 1911 or 12 somewhere along there. And Dr. Hutchison lived

there for a number of years and married his sister-in-law who was a widow and uh—

**Kevin Roe:** And he lived—

**Bertie Poston:** In [19]27 the Bowmans bought from— Dr. Hutchison died, and Gilbert Hutchison who apparently managed his estate, sold to the Bowmans. And what do they say? After that, past is prologue or something? [Laughter] It is pretty well known what occurred after the Bowmans bought the property. They built the distillery, continued to operate a large dairy that the company had established. I can't quite place it but it was I would say about a mile eastward from, from Mister— I can't pronounce his name.

**Kevin Roe:** Grubisich.

**Bertie Poston:** Yes, from the house where he lived I would say it was back in that direction. Because I used to, there was a school there, that's where I went to school as a child.

**Kevin Roe:** Right by the Golf Course Island area? Is that kinda where it is?

**Bertie Poston:** Well that's what I always say. It was in that area and the schoolhouse was there that Dr. Wiehle built. And three houses. And I believe an additional house was built on that. I think the company built that after they bought from the Wiehles. And of course they were all torn down when Simon bought the property.

**Kevin Roe:** But when the Bowmans came in was the lumber mill still there or did people have to change professions to keep uh—

**Bertie Poston:** No uh—

[Telephone ringing]

**Bertie Poston:** Now let's see where was I?

**Kevin Roe:** We were talking about did people have to change their line of work when all these— the farm was sold so often, was your father, like I was wondering, that you said he worked in the lumber mill or with Dr. Wiehle when the Hutchisons and the Bowmans bought it, did they change the line of work people had to do?

**Bertie Poston:** Well then, the Bowmans, the mill, as a matter of fact, when the Wiehles still owned the— it was a huge building, two story affair and it burned and they rebuilt it and it burnt again. [Laughter] And by the time the Bowmans came here they were not interested in the lumber part of it and my father took it over but

he didn't have— he operated a lumber business and mill on Baron Cameron Avenue between Reston and Route 7 down there in that hallow. And for a number of years he operated it on his own. And then the Bowmans got interested in the distillery and they were no longer interested in the lumber apart from the fact that he furnished them lumber they needed to for whiskey barrels for instance. I believe they were made of oak or something of that sort. And his eyesight failed. He lived to be 92 years old, but he retired for a long, long time before that.

**Kevin Roe:** And when did he pass away?

**Bertie Poston:** 1955. My mother was 96 and she died a couple of years before he did.

**Kevin Roe:** Did they always stay in the same house all those years?

**Bertie Poston:** Oh, yeah. When they first came here, they lived for couple years in one of the houses that I described near the schoolhouse down in that area. And then moved into the house that is still standing there. That's been sold but I don't own it anymore.

**Kevin Roe:** How long ago did you move out of that house?

**Bertie Poston:** Beg pardon?

**Kevin Roe:** How long ago did you move out of your old house on Reston Avenue?

**Bertie Poston:** Be two years this September. I stuck by it, but I just couldn't bare to leave it. But it was getting very much run down and I was somewhat isolated from neighbors. I did not have any neighbors at all, particularly when they took over the area there and built the apartments. The one neighbor I had moved back to Herndon.

**Kevin Roe:** Because there was a house there.

**Bertie Poston:** There was a house there.

**Kevin Roe:** Right, yeah, just a few years—

**Bertie Poston:** It was built for Dr. Hutchison's sister-in-law whom he later married. And that was the house that was not built by the Wiehles. I had forgotten about that house.

**Kevin Roe:** So was your house kind of just getting a little too hard to take care of and...

**Bertie Poston:** I didn't hear?

**Kevin Roe:** Was your house just getting a little too big to take care of, that is why you moved out? Or was it because you were made an offer to sell it?

**Bertie Poston:** No, I moved out because of well, it was dangerous to live there alone. And my niece lived with me but she was— well we were two women alone there. That was alright up to a point but then it was not safe anymore. So my nephew finally persuaded to move and practically propelled me over here but I like it very much. This past winter I was very glad I didn't live in the old house.

**Kevin Roe:** Just really cold. [Laughter]

**Bertie Poston:** It had been a little chilly. Frozen pipes and...

**Kevin Roe:** How many people lived in your house when your whole family was together?

**Bertie Poston:** My mother said the house was built for the manager. And I am not sure that he lived there. But she said it was— she estimated it was seven years old when my father moved in. So, I'm not sure how many families, if any, lived in it before.

**Kevin Roe:** When your family was living there, did you have a large family living there at the time?

**Bertie Poston:** No, I just had one brother. So, we didn't have a big family. And so far as I know, my family was the only one that lived there. But if she ever told me about anyone who lived in it before I have forgotten. So in my mind it was always occupied by my family.

**Kevin Roe:** I guess you were pretty pretty sad to say goodbye to it.

**Bertie Poston:** Well I get a lump in my throat but I sort of gotten harden to it, I don't mind it anymore.

**Kevin Roe:** Well this whole area, I am sure you have seen it change incredibly over your lifetime?

**Bertie Poston:** Oh, my, yes. As a child, for instance I used to walk to school and I walked through fields that are occupied now by Golf Island apartments and houses. And I can remember that two huge chestnut trees— and on a frosty morning in October when you would be, when I would be walking to school, you could just simply rake up these big chest nuts that birds had bursted open and the chestnuts had fallen and there is not a chestnut tree alive as far as I know anywhere in the area now and the woods were full of chestnut trees. Of course the church was in

that brick building down at the corner below the brick house. The upper floor was the church and the lower floor was a furniture store.

**Kevin Roe:** Was that town hall too, I guess?

**Bertie Poston:** Well that was— it operated as everything. Dr. Wiehle established a library called it the Academy of Sciences. And the whole wall in the back of that hall or church, academy, one end was a pulpit and all the trappings that you're supposed to have around the altar and the other end was this huge library that he filled with books some of them fiction. A lot of them were books on science and he would once a week— I think my father belonged to a club or whatever you might call it and he would lecture on scientific subjects. He was a very brilliant man. I don't think he— I don't know— he came, I think they came from Philadelphia. And I suppose he practiced medicine there but he didn't here. And my memory of him is he was an organist and he played the organ at church. And I can remember how he would bow along, make gestures, over, as he played and that is what my sole memory of Dr. Wiehle is when he played the organ.

**Kevin Roe:** Was the town itself kind of isolated from other communities like Herndon? Or was it, did you often go to places, go out and like make a trip to Herndon or use to take the railroad into the city and so forth?

**Bertie Poston:** Well we use to walk to Herndon. And then of course, we rode the train. And Wiehle— people came from over beyond Hunters Woods or a couple of towns, one called Vale and one called Navy, and people used to come from that area to the church in Wiehle. And people would come— there was a small settlement called Pinecrest between Wiehle and Hunters Mill and the people came from there to church and through the woods there were houses for families, I don't know, some of them may have worked for the Wiehles and maybe they had other means of support but they would come to the church and of course those houses had all disappeared by the time I was old enough to recognize them.

**Kevin Roe:** So you'd often knew the people all throughout the whole area because of the church and thinks like that and school and so forth?

**Bertie Poston:** Well children used to come— their children came to the school and children came from, oh, almost to Dranesville. Apparently there was no school at Dranesville at that time. And Dr. Wiehle supported— he built the schoolhouse and he supported the teacher. And then the county established the public school system and they took over. And I went to that school until I was, well I had completed the— I suppose in those days, you weren't graded like you are nowadays. And then later I went to— there was a Seminary in Herndon for girls, the Herndon Seminary. And my mother, she wasn't particularly interested in any part of it except the



music because I learned to play at an early age. And I went there for the— and graduated in their course of music.

**Kevin Roe:** And you stayed in Wiehle area all your life? Or did you ever go off for a few years to go to college or to live in another town and come back home?

**Bertie Poston:** No, I never...I didn't even graduate from high school. At the seminary, when you finished there, you had to go to a public school, high school for another year, which I didn't do. And I worked for the government for forty-six years.

**Kevin Roe:** In Washington?

**Bertie Poston:** I went to work during World War I and worked until 1964.

**Kevin Roe:** So you took the train in to D.C.?

**Bertie Poston:** I used to use that little train then later I had a car and another girl. We lived at Dranesville and we used to drive and later when the World War II came along I stayed in apartments in Washington during the week and then would come out here as long as my parents lived, well I came long after that really, as until I retired I always came home on weekends.

**Kevin Roe:** And how long— when did the trains stop running? In the [19]60s was it?

**Bertie Poston:** They stopped passenger service... I really don't remember. They hadn't, they still operated after the Bowmans bought the place. And I would say about ten years ago. They operated as a freight line and they carried the mail. And I guess was it about, I would say around ten or twelve years ago that they discontinued entirely.

**Kevin Roe:** And how long would it take you to get to work like from the Sunset Hills Post Office all the way to Washington?

**Bertie Poston:** Oh, it took one, a whole hour, because they didn't make very much speed.

**Kevin Roe:** And they stopped a lot.

**Bertie Poston:** And then they had to stop, they stopped at Falls Church and Dunn Loring, Vienna, and Hunters Mill and they made so many stops. And they of course, when the Southern Railway had it, they went into Union Station but when the Washington Old Dominion took over their terminal was in Georgetown, and then later they established and built a station on this side of the Key Bridge.

**Kevin Roe:** In Rosslyn?

**Bertie Poston:** They discontinued service, seems to me, around about somewhere in the late [19]30s and passenger service, they continued freight service and mail, they carried the mail, and when the war started, World War II, they all through petitions, and a lot of people commuted from Herndon, they re-established passenger service and continued during the war. And then when the war was over and the emergency was over, why they went back to just freight service, mail service.

**Kevin Roe:** But you had a car by then, you drove to work by then in your car, I guess?

**Bertie Poston:** Well I drove during the summer for a while and then as the war progressed, I started having to work at night and I started staying in altogether and continued then. But for a number of years we stayed in town during the winter and drive during the summer. I only used the railroad for about three years.

**Kevin Roe:** Were there many roads built around here when Robert E. Simon came in, I just have always wanted to know what roads were here in what is now Reston? I mean there a lot that've been built since then obviously. I was just wondering if you could tell me what was here when Simon came in?

**Bertie Poston:** Well, Old Reston Avenue was the main road. And then there was the road that they called Spring Road that goes, that runs well um...

**Kevin Roe:** Is it the one that runs into Herndon?

**Bertie Poston:** It's, you see – I never knew too much about what is on the other side of the railroad. My knowledge was purely all confined to this side of the railroad because this side was what Dr. Wiehle owned and it was the other side that the Thornton's owned. And then later when the Thornton family passed on and they sold to a paper company that had had it up until the Bowmans bought it and then they bought both tracks. So you are talking about public roads?

**Kevin Roe:** Just places, how you got places. If you wanted to go somewhere where how would you get there? Were most of them paved?

**Bertie Poston:** Well for a number of years Reston Avenue was just simply a dirt road and then Baron Cameron Avenue was a road that went into Herndon and went on down into Route 7 and it was a long long time before that was paved. I honestly don't remember the dates.

**Kevin Roe:** I was just wondering.

**Bertie Poston:** But I do remember getting stuck in the mud because when I was driving, they were still dirt roads.

**Kevin Roe:** Was most of the area just woods? By even up to the time the Bowmans sold it to Robert Simon, was it still a very wooded area?

**Bertie Poston:** Oh, yes, the Bowmans cleared a good deal of the land after they came. But up to that time there were not very many fields, it was mostly woods. But they had a lot of beef cattle and they cleared a good part of the land for the cattle. But all around here was woods.

**Kevin Roe:** So it was a pretty thickly forested area?

**Bertie Poston:** Oh, yes.

**Kevin Roe:** And what were the Bowmans themselves like? Did you get to meet them often? Or would they stay in their house and not come out much? I was always wondering what they were like themselves?

**Bertie Poston:** The Bowmans themselves?

**Kevin Roe:** Yeah.

**Bertie Poston:** Well my connection to the Bowmans was he was very much interested in the hunt club and he built a kennel right across the road from my house and he had fifty foxhounds in that kennel. And I was then driving during the summer, and when those fifty dogs started to bark, and they would do it all night at intervals, and my contact with Mr. Bowman was protesting to him about his dogs. He said he couldn't understand it, it was music to his ears. How could I object to those dogs barking? Well it was— have you ever heard a bunch of foxhounds baying?

**Kevin Roe:** It's a lot of noise.

**Bertie Poston:** Well finally after I tormented the life out of him, for about three years I put up with it, he moved them down to— there was an old [intelligible] mill, where he started the distillery, he moved them down there. And that's where the distillery is now. And then I could hear, you could hear them, people in Herndon could hear those dogs. And I could hear them faintly but it wasn't under my bedroom window. And Mrs. Bowman, I met her a few times, but she identified herself with the church. And the church was operating then. It's burned since, it was, oh up here, um...

**Kevin Roe:** This is a different church then the one you—

**Bertie Poston:** It was up at the corner of the old temporary road and Old Reston Avenue. And my sister-in-law, my brother's wife, she went to church and she knew Mrs. Bowman and she liked her very much. And I had no occasion to come in contact with her two boys. On a couple of occasions, DeLong assisted me. I had occasion go to Fairfax Courthouse and he went with me. And he and his wife, and then... my father had a stroke and I stayed home for six months and I used to go to church Sunday night and play the organ for them. The Bowmans decided to have services in the church and they paid the minister and had various ministers coming and didn't belong to any particular, uh what am I trying to say?

**Kevin Roe:** Particular denomination?

**Bertie Poston:** Oh, denomination is what I'm trying to think of. And then DeLong and his wife would take us home. So, that really was the only contact. I never really knew Smith at all outside of he was a pallbearer at my mother's funeral.

**Kevin Roe:** This was Smith Jr.? I guess, the younger, Smith Bowman?

**Bertie Poston:** DeLong is the youngest.

**Kevin Roe:** I think his father was named Smith Bowman though too, right? I guess?

**Bertie Poston:** Oh, yes.

**Kevin Roe:** Okay, good to know. I'm just going to turn the tape over real quick here.

[end of transcription]

[start of transcription]

**Kevin Roe:** I was just always wondering, if they were very visible people or they were just kind of stayed up in their house and the distillery—

**Bertie Poston:** Well their socialized seemed to be confined to the hunting club people.

**Kevin Roe:** Very aristocratic.

**Bertie Poston:** Yes, they were different from the Wiehles and from the members of the company. Dr. Hutchison and Mr. Crighton— they were— well they didn't have any part with the people who lived on the place. And the Wiehles did. And so did Mr. Crighton and Dr. Hutchison, they were different kind of people.

**Kevin Roe:** Did they have, lots of people like farming the land for them? I guess, tenant farmers, the Bowmans, to keep their—

**Bertie Poston:** No, I don't know. I don't think so.

**Kevin Roe:** I found there were two houses, right behind where the toll road is now. I guess if you look right across the street across Sunset Hills Road, from the distillery, there's still two remains of tool houses back in the woods there. Do you know who lived there?

**Bertie Poston:** I don't know who lived there. But, I think the Bowmans moved those houses. Vaguely I think, someone told me that the Bowmans— maybe those houses were over at Golf Island, I never did know what happened to them and its possible they moved those houses over there, because I don't know of any houses that were over there in the early days.

**Kevin Roe:** Yeah, because they're still standing, they're just about to be torn down, I think but—

**Bertie Poston:** Well, I have never seen them really.

**Kevin Roe:** It's a dirt road off there, I think. I just went back there one day and saw them.

**Bertie Poston:** Now the Thorntons had a house. They came from England, that is their father did, and owned this, the whole property. Wiehles bought from the Thorntons. And I remember there was Mr. Tom Thornton and three— none was married, three sisters and they used to ride in a vehicle that somebody said belonged to Jeff Davis. I think the Bowmans still had it in their basement, but I don't know what happened to it later. But anyway they had an English type of cottage and the windows were lighted, not artificially but really lighted and they were casement windows. But I used to go there, the family that really lived next door to us for a while and he built, I told you that he bought the house and re-built it next to us. And they lived there and numbers of times went over there and was quite familiar with the house. Well after she died and he died. And the Bowmans bought the property and whoever lived there set it on— well they didn't deliberately set it on fire but whatever they did, it caught fire and burned. But it was really something to look at, so different from the rest of the houses.

**Kevin Roe:** I think I have a picture of that.

**Bertie Poston:** It's probably in there.

**Kevin Roe:** I want to see if that's the one that you were talking about. Is that right where on the other side of Sunset Hills Road? Was it across the street?

**Bertie Poston:** I think it's, probably up that dirt road that you're talking about cause they changed the road. If I'm not—

**Kevin Roe:** Is that it?

**Bertie Poston:** That's it.

**Kevin Roe:** Oh, wow. Okay. And that burned down in?

**Bertie Poston:** It burned down, oh long time ago.

**Kevin Roe:** A lot of things seem to have burned because there wasn't a fire company around or just the way the houses were built?

**Bertie Poston:** Well I don't know. They used wood and maybe got their stoves too hot or something, I don't know why so many places burned, but I do remember when the mill burned, only I was what, five or six years old. Cause it made such a huge fire, there were a couple of houses, this is kind of just an amusing story that you probably wouldn't be interested in—

**Kevin Roe:** I'm interested in everything. [Laughter]

**Bertie Poston:** The family of Sherwoods lived in the house. There were two houses next to that church, the brick building where the church was. And the mill was down oh, I would say— there is a big brick building there on the edge of the pond. Well down beyond that was the mill. And these people were very religious and believed the world would eventually be burned and destroyed by fire. And they— one of the daughters, Mary Robert Wiehle and lived down, her name was Molly she lived down in Mr. Grubisich's house and they had two daughters that were living at home. And one of them woke and the whole room was light, with blazing light that they weren't used to, and she got up and looked out the window and the whole sky was blazing. So she called her sister and she said, get up, I think the world is on fire. And her sister said well she would go and— she called her father Pap. She would go and tell Pap. So she went in and told Mr. Sherwood that she believed the world was on fire and he got up and went to the window and he said, well it is on fire. I will go down and get Molly and we will all die together. Give me my pants. And his wife who was rather matter of fact didn't go for all that I think, she says, well if you're going to get destroyed by fire what do you want with your pants? [Laughter]. So we still use that as a joke. So when he got outside, it was the mill. And it made such an intense fire that it melted the puddy on the windows of the Wiehle house.

**Kevin Roe:** Oh, really?

**Bertie Poston:** Cause it, it was a big building and of course a lot of lumber in it.

**Kevin Roe:** Right.

**Bertie Poston:** Its all destroyed.

**Kevin Roe:** You said that the pond was there when you were a girl. Was it a manmade lake then?

**Bertie Poston:** Was what?

**Kevin Roe:** Was the pond there when you were a girl?

**Bertie Poston:** Well it wasn't a pond then. It was a lake. It was a big lake. There were three lakes. It was the main lake and then there was a bridge where it's just a dirt road now or paved road. And there was one under the bridge and then one right next to the gazebo. All fed by the same springs. Springs up there and under that gazebo was a dairy and I used to go in there as a child and they had— a concrete I guess, I don't know whether they made concrete in those days, I guess they did. But anyhow, they would set the milk crocks down in the water constantly change, running from the spring and kept the butter and milk from spoiling. I don't know whether that's still went under the gazebo or not but I have an idea it was until they— I think they had to restore it cause it was deteriorating and maybe the dairy is not underneath that anymore.

**Kevin Roe:** Oh, so you just entered it from the gazebo?

**Bertie Poston:** It was down underneath the gazebo proper. And Dr. Wiehle had a big Newfoundland dog called Juno. She was a beautiful dog. And he would come up on Saturdays during the winter and— she was taken care of by, they had a colored coachman I think he looked after her. He would bring her a bone or something special and she would sit out there in the gazebo and wait for him. She seemed to sense when it was Saturday. And after he died, they said that she would go out there and wait for him. Poor Juno later she got in bad company and began to kill people's chickens. And, they had Walsh, the colored coachman, take her out and kill her. He shot her. I remember that so well. I was so shocked. It was such a beautiful dog.

**Kevin Roe:** She just started doing this for no reason at all? Or just...

**Bertie Poston:** Well.

**Kevin Roe:** Did you have, I know Mrs. Shriver told me that when you were a girl they would sometimes cut ice from the lakes in the winter and store it in the icehouse. Did they have lots of social activities like that when you were a kid? What other kind of things went on the town like in the winters and summers?

**Bertie Poston:** No. The church was really the only, well I suppose, I don't think the Wiehles entertained so much. Those things, I was a child then and I probably

wouldn't have thought much about it anyway. They were more interested in church affairs than having a ball or they used to have dances at the hotel. But cause I played the piano there several times when I was fifteen or sixteen years old. The church would periodically have a supper for the benefit of the church, an oyster supper or ice cream festival in the summertime. And as far as social activities are concerned, I don't know much about that.

**Kevin Roe:** I was just wondering what, I know you went to school and you had classmates and so forth, what kind of, school and church were probably the biggest day to day things for you, I guess?

**Bertie Poston:** Things were then, in those days, not like they are now.

**Kevin Roe:** Oh, I know.

**Bertie Poston:** Quite has changed.

**Kevin Roe:** Basically, how do you feel about the way this whole area has changed so much so fast? Must be kind of shocking everyday something new happens here?

**Bertie Poston:** Well, its gradual. If it all happened in a day or two, it would be more of a shock. But I have made a lot of friends that I never would have made otherwise. I have been active, I was the church organist, the first organist for [inaudible] Church. But I do now and then remember how much simpler life was. It's so complicated now. Of course, now I don't feel like walking out in the woods. But then you were free to wander around the woods. And driving along, I walked to Dranesville, which is about three 3 miles, on a number of occasions when I used to park my car over there with friends who lived on Route 7. And I have walked home for reasons, the car didn't work or something, and didn't have any sense of fear or whatever. Well I wouldn't dare do that now.

**Kevin Roe:** It's so busy. When Reston first started becoming Reston, I guess, did the area around here change a lot? I know Robert Simon lived for a while in DeLong Bowman's houses. Did you ever get a chance to come in contact with him and anybody else that was moving in here and so forth? Right away or was it kind of gradual?

**Bertie Poston:** I would say it was gradual because he didn't have it so very long. And I don't think it's turn out like he expected it to. I didn't pay very much attention to it until I retired and came home. And they had just started building their houses. See I was use to the old type frame house and I couldn't figure out whether the house was— it was completed and I couldn't figure whether it was in process or whether it, well, I wasn't familiar with that type of architecture. And



that sort of blew me over. And I don't know what I thought about it. Some of the things I've appreciated and sometimes I've wished it hadn't occurred.

**Kevin Roe:** What were some of the better things, you think have happened since as a result of all the new towns and so forth? I know you said you made a lot of friends through the church and so forth. Are there any other things that you find that are better than they were before? Or changes that were for the better?

**Bertie Poston:** Well, things are more convenient now. Then your nearest shopping was Herndon. And not very much of a shopping area there. Really, if you wanted to do any real shopping you had to go to Washington. Now, you don't really have to go to Washington for anything.

**Kevin Roe:** Right, you just go to the mall I guess or something like that. Well, were there a lot of people living here still when the Bowmans sold the place? Were there still as many families as you said when you were a girl or had it kind of gotten to be a smaller community?

**Bertie Poston:** Well, they still continued to be the people who worked on the place. Nobody lived here who didn't work for the Bowmans. And I didn't know the families. I was working and wasn't here.

**Kevin Roe:** So did most of them leave when Robert E. Simon bought the farm? Most of the other families just sell their houses too? Was that part of the deal?

**Bertie Poston:** Well nobody owned the houses. The Bowmans owned all the houses—

**Kevin Roe:** They were tenants.

**Bertie Poston:** Except ours and the ones that Mr. Grubisich lives in. The houses were all owned by Bowmans. And when they sold the place of course the houses became the property of Mr. Simon and he— I suppose he notified them to vacate. That part of it I don't know much about.

**Kevin Roe:** Yeah, okay. I have some other questions for you here. Are you glad you have stayed in Reston most of your life, in the Reston area? Or do you wish there were places you wish you may have had a chance to go see or have you really liked being in the same place most of your life?

**Bertie Poston:** No, I don't have much of a wanderlust. As of matter of fact, I'm very much, very reluctant to change. I'd put up with a bad situation, rather than change to a good one if it involved change. So that's the way I am made. I'm very glad that I've been able to stay in one place. I don't have any regrets about not being able to move around. I never had any inclination to.

**Kevin Roe:** You said your brother lived right next door to you for a while. Is he still living? Or did he move somewhere else? After—

**Bertie Poston:** My brother did the same thing that I did.

**Kevin Roe:** Oh, he lived there all his life?

**Bertie Poston:** He never left home. He was four years older than I and he died when he was 70. But he had three children and the youngest one is a lawyer in Washington, Raymond Poston Jr. and he has, four children. And, my niece Agnus. Agnus, this is Kevin.

**Kevin Roe:** Hi.

Agnus Poston: Hello

**Bertie Poston:** I don't know your last name.

**Kevin Roe:** Roe, r-o-e.

**Bertie Poston:** Agnus lives with me. She was one of the three children. The older girl lives in Baltimore. She's married but she doesn't have any family, doesn't have any children. So my family is rather limited and they stayed right here. Nobody's gone anywhere. So.

**Kevin Roe:** That's good for you I guess, to keep contact.

**Bertie Poston:** Oh, yes.

**Kevin Roe:** What was your brothers name? I never got to—

**Bertie Poston:** His name was Raymond.

**Kevin Roe:** Raymond, okay.

**Bertie Poston:** Raymond B. Poston.

**Kevin Roe:** And your father?

**Bertie Poston:** My fathers name was Jackson Lee Poston.

**Kevin Roe:** And you said he came from Bluemont? Your father came from Bluemont, you said?

**Bertie Poston:** My father came from Bluemont. My mother was born and raised in Dranesville.

**Kevin Roe:** Oh, really?

**Bertie Poston:** Her name was Farr, f-a-double r.

**Kevin Roe:** Oh, I have heard that name.

**Bertie Poston:** [Inaudible]

**Kevin Roe:** And did you still have relatives in Bluemont when you were a girl? Or that you'd go visit?

**Bertie Poston:** My father never, he didn't keep close touch with his family. I don't know anybody in his family. And, I don't know anyone, well, I've outlived everybody. So, I don't know anybody in my mother's family either. So I am very limited as far as family is concerned.

**Kevin Roe:** But you do have a lot of friends?

**Bertie Poston:** Oh, yes.

**Kevin Roe:** I can tell that.

**Bertie Poston:** Oh, yes. I don't know what, that's one of the advantages, I wouldn't have had all these friends. I don't know, I would have probably buried myself up in that house and wouldn't— well I have friends in Dranesville that I grew up with. One she's about four years younger than I am. But we've stayed close, cause we were young girls together.

**Kevin Roe:** She go to school with you here? Did she go to the same school you went to?

**Bertie Poston:** No, she went to the public school in Herndon. The way I knew her, I came in contact with her sister-in-law at the girl's school when I went and we were friends. She's still living but she lives in North Carolina and she has Alzheimer's disease and she was a year or two older than I. She's still living but she doesn't know anyone.

**Kevin Roe:** I was reading, a lady named Nan Netherton I guess who wrote a little book about Reston, she had a little part about that you said the school you went to was roof was often covered with spitballs. I was wondering if you, could tell me a little bit about what going to school was like in Wiehle?

**Bertie Poston:** Well, they had, boys sat on one side and girls sat on the other and they had two separate entrances, boys went in one side and girls went in the other. And the ceiling was wainscoted and it was covered with spitballs. [Laughter] It was so high that nobody attempted to go up there and scrap them off. And it was heated by a woodstove and it was just a one room school. They were obliged to maintain an average of fifteen. The county would have closed it if they didn't average that many. So, my mother was so uneasy with fear they'd close the school.

She wanted my brother to go to school. And I was only five. I'm not sure, well I can't remember whether I was four and would've been five in March or was five and would've been six in March. But in order to keep the average at fifteen, the teacher said send me and she would, she looked after me. So there wasn't any cutting out pictures in kindergarten and stuff like that. I had my primer and I went to school all day.

**Kevin Roe:** You went right into it.

**Bertie Poston:** They had quite a time to keep me going. I'd get as far as the mill, I had to pass the mill, I knew my father worked there and I wouldn't go any further. So he would come up and take me back down and keep me until dinner time or lunch time or he always went home. It was breakfast, dinner and supper in those days. And much to my mother's disgust he'd bring me home.

**Kevin Roe:** So you were kind of rebellious student there?

**Bertie Poston:** Well, it was tiresome for a child, that young to sit—

**Kevin Roe:** Oh, I know. [Laughter]

**Bertie Poston:** All day long, from 9 until 4.

**Kevin Roe:** Well, did you, I guess how old were you when you went to the Seminary in Herndon? When you were fourteen or still in high school age?

**Bertie Poston:** I was sixteen.

**Kevin Roe:** Sixteen. And that was a four-year school? Or two years?

**Bertie Poston:** Well, the teacher that I had for four years, she used high school books and we really had some training on teaching in high school there but it wasn't a high school. And at the seminary, what I was principally interested in was the music part of it. But I took all the rest of the stuff right along. But my mind didn't roam in that direction.

**Kevin Roe:** You played the piano you said.

**Bertie Poston:** I had to practice half an hour in the morning and a half an hour in the evening at the school. And I was so eager to get into my practicing that the teacher who taught, other subjects reminded me one day that there was something else in life besides music. She got a little irritated, she said, "You seem to think that there is nothing in life but music, but there is." So, she balled me out.

**Kevin Roe:** And did she have an effect?

**Bertie Poston:** No, I still... She told my aunt that I was the most restless child she'd ever come in contact with. But there were four single ladies, the oldest was in her seventies and the youngest was the music teacher was somewhere in her fifties probably, I thought was terribly old. And they never been married and their mother had established that school. And a lot of the older people in Herndon had gone there as youngsters. The mother started the school years and years ago.

**Kevin Roe:** Where was this school in Herndon?

**Bertie Poston:** It was in Herndon on what they call Grace Street I believe. I know it was past the church there on the corner either the Episcopal or the old Episcopal or the old Methodist.

**Kevin Roe:** Is it still standing? Or is it still there? Or is it—

**Bertie Poston:** Yes, the— one of them, the Methodist church I think was taken over by the Masons, the Lodge.

**Kevin Roe:** Yeah, I know that one.

**Bertie Poston:** And the—

**Kevin Roe:** It's right on the corner of Elden.

**Bertie Poston:** I don't know what's in the old Episcopal church.

**Kevin Roe:** The school where you went to was that still there?

**Bertie Poston:** I think it has a house.

**Kevin Roe:** House, yeah, right.

**Bertie Poston:** I haven't seen it for a long long time.

**Kevin Roe:** Was downtown Herndon pretty busy place then? Or was it always kind of relatively small?

**Bertie Poston:** Oh yeah. Herndon of course has changed but not to the degree a lot of places have.

**Kevin Roe:** Yeah, they are trying to preserve it right now.

**Bertie Poston:** Yes, they are.

**Kevin Roe:** What do you think about all those, a lot of people talk about preserving older homes and the past and so forth even though with the rest of the area is so different looking? Do you think that is useful now even after all that's

been done or do you think, it's a good thing to try to keep those older things we still have around here?

**Bertie Poston:** Oh, I think they should. I'm not crazy about going around to old houses.

**Kevin Roe:** No. [Laughter]

**Bertie Poston:** It's a little depressing. When you're thinking about the people who lived there are gone. And when they have— every once in a while they open old houses to the public, I never join those, I don't care about that at all.

**Kevin Roe:** Only if somebody could still live there and use it as a place to live.

**Bertie Poston:** It's kind of depressing.

**Kevin Roe:** Yeah. Just to tour them. Because I know there a lot of like [inaudible] groups that used to live, and it's a nice house and people still live in it and I think, I guess that's a good way to use a home like that instead of just opening it up for a tour, I guess. But your house, was the one you moved out of, was it becoming, hard to heat and stuff like that? Or because—

**Bertie Poston:** Oh, yes. When it was built there was no such thing as insulation. The attic was deadly hot in the summer and deadly cold in the winter. And the basement had a spring. There's springs all over this area. When they were putting up the post for the electric company, they had a bad time of going deep enough because they run into a stream of water. And the basement at home, the water would bubble up right in the middle, it didn't come through the walls. So we could never have a basement or a furnace down there. So our heater was oil space heaters, and the one in the kitchen, and one in the living room. And in the wintertime, if a real cold spell came a long and the wind blew particularly, I'd get frozen pipes. So, I really had a bad time during the wintertime.

**Kevin Roe:** So, I guess you don't miss the frozen pipes? Those are tough.

**Bertie Poston:** Well its been quite a relief not to have to worry. When I get the weather report and they talk about being down to zero and it's been below zero, which is unheard of here, really. I feel a sense of gratitude, that I don't have to worry about that anymore. If I were home, I would be a nervous wreck.

**Kevin Roe:** Did it snow more when you were— do you remember it snowing a lot when you were younger? Or—

**Bertie Poston:** Well it been many years when we hadn't had enough snow to lay on the ground. And then, last, this past snow that we had—

**Kevin Roe:** This winter.

**Bertie Poston:** About a week ago, couple weeks ago, early January, that was unheard of. I've never known of— we've had big snowfalls but wasn't followed by one immediately

**Kevin Roe:** Yeah.

**Bertie Poston:** So that was very unusual.

**Kevin Roe:** But in the winter, did it get pretty cold? I guess, did they use the lake for ice, stuff like that down there? And ice skating?

**Bertie Poston:** Well there was an icehouse down there. I'm not sure that— my eye sights gotten kind of— I don't see as well when we go out. There was an icehouse down at the corner of that pond and when the ice would get, say ten inches thick, they would saw blocks cause I remember distinctly they had these— what do you call those ice picks?

**Kevin Roe:** Tongs?

**Bertie Poston:** Whatever.

**Kevin Roe:** Yeah, I know what you mean. [Laughter]

**Bertie Poston:** They would, pack them on sawdust and during the summertime the Wiehles and a couple members, the president of the company— Mr. Crighton was president would until electricity was introduced in the area, why they would get the ice out of the icehouse during the summer time.

**Kevin Roe:** When the distillery was built, were a lot of people opposed to the fact that they'd be making alcohol here? Or, I know that—

**Bertie Poston:** Oh, the church people were. The Sherwood family that I was speaking of, they really ran the church for many years. And they were very, very, very much opposed to it, very bitter. And Goldie Wiehle, after her father died, she wouldn't sell to the Bowmans. She sold to a family, Thompsons I think. I think Mr. Grubisich bought from the Thompsons. And they were very resentful. But it never troubled me, I don't know, it didn't matter really.

**Kevin Roe:** I've heard stories that sometimes some of the cows would get into the mash and wander around a little tipsy. Did that happen often? Or is that some—

**Bertie Poston:** I don't know whether it happened or not but, they fed the cow mash. And driving along Reston Avenue on the way to Dranesville you could get a terrific whiff of the alcohol.

**Kevin Roe:** Where were most of the cleared fields, along Reston Avenue there?  
Or—

**Bertie Poston:** Well there was one back of Bradleys there. That was a big field. And between that and Dranesville was all solid woods. It didn't have any other fields. And then, all down around the dairy, there were fields but there were fields there in the first place. Cause the Wiehles had a wonderful peach orchard. And they had their own cattle. They had horses. They had a red barn. I don't know whether it's still standing or not but down below where the mill was. And they used to ride down on foxes.

**Kevin Roe:** Was the Fairfax hunt a very big, event every year? Or did a lot of people come into stay at the hotel when they had the hunt there? Or was it kind of a smaller thing that went on every week—

[end of transcription]

Transcribed by Johana Flores, April 2020